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THE MERCURIAL VAPOUR BATH

LANGSTON PARKER, F.R.C.S.

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By the same Author.

PUBLISHED BY MESSRS. CHURCHILL AND SONS.

THE MODERN TREATMENT OF SYPHILITIC DISEASES,

Both Primary and Secondary,

Containing an Account of the Treatment of Constitutional Syphilis by a Safe and Successful Method; with numerous Cases, Formulæ, and Clinical Observations.

FOURTH EDITION,

ENTIRELY RE-WRITTEN, WITH NUMEROUS ADDITIONS.

AN ENQUIRY INTO THE EFFECTS OF MANY NEW REMEDIES IN THE TREATMENT OF CANCERS.

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THE

MERCURIAL VAPOUR BATH:

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF ITS

SUCCESSFUL MODE OF EMPLOYMENT.

AN EDITION ENTIRELY RE-WRITTEN, WITH NUMEROUS ADDITIONAL FACTS AND OBSERVATIONS.

BY

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&c. &c.

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PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE plan of treatment which the following pages advocate and illustrate, does away with all the evils generally attributable to mercurial treatments, whilst it possesses all their advantages. It does not, in ordinary cases, require confinement; it never impairs the appetite; does not produce salivation or ulceration of the mouth, mercurial erythismus or blotches on the skin; and if associated with internal treatment by mercury, reduces what is required to an exceedingly minute quantity. In addition to this, treatments

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according to this plan are safer, quicker, more certain, less frequently followed by relapses, indeed very rarely so, and are capable of working cures in obstinate cases which have resisted all other modes of treatment.

The method which I practise consists in applying the vapour of the bi-sulphuret, grey oxide, binoxide, or iodide of mercury (or calomel, as suggested by Mr. H. Lee), in a moist state, to the whole surface of the body, by which, after the continuance of the process for twenty or thirty minutes, more or less, perspiration is induced. This process is repeated as frequently as the nature of the case may require till a cure be effected, and is or is not associated with internal medicines.

The dry mercurial vapour has been long employed in the treatment of various forms of syphilitic disease, and has had many advocates; but whether from the imperfect mode

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of its application its effects have been uncertain, and it has fallen into disuse. A German surgeon, named Werneck, has used it more methodically, and his success has been much more satisfactory. The method I employ has great advantages over the dry fumigation; its effects are certain, and can be regulated to a great nicety, and the heat and moisture produced during the time the patient is exposed to the vapour of mercury, by inducing perspiration, contribute, no doubt, materially to the cure of the disease. However, I have constantly succeeded with this plan when the dry fumigation has failed altogether, or produced little effect.

The speedy and perfect cure of many of the cases detailed in the following pages has been very remarkable, as a perusal of their history will show; and a vast number of patients have been perfectly and permanently

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restored to health by comparatively short treatments by this plan, after the failure of all ordinary treatments pursued through a long series of years.

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PREFACE.

THIS can hardly be called a second edition; it is an entirely re-written account of the mode of employment and advantages to be derived from the use of moist mercurial vapour in secondary and constitutional syphilis. It contains the results of eighteen years experience in the use of the remedy, taken from my own practice, and that of other surgeons in various parts of the world, more especially in India and America. Unlike some other remedies, it has not disappointed the hopes I originally entertained of it. And I venture to confirm, what others beside myself have

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said, that the more they see of the action of the remedy the more highly they estimate its value in the palliation and cure of the disease.

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THE

MERCURIAL VAPOUR BATH,

AND ITS SUCCESSFUL MODE OF EMPLOYMENT.

History

It is now nearly eighteen years since I first introduced a method of treating syphilis, and some other forms of disease, by moist mercurial and sulphur vapour, *i.e.*, by the mixture of the fumes of various preparations of sulphur, mercury, and iodine, with common steam. This method, which I shall presently more particularly describe, has been attended with a very remarkable degree of success, not only in my own practice, and in this country, but in that of other surgeons in most parts of the world.

Testimony to its value

An American physician, D. L. P. Yandall, who lately visited this country (in 1868),

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bears the following testimony to its value: "During the last twelve or fifteen years I have, in my brother's practice and in my own, treated at least fifteen hundred cases of constitutional syphilis by the mercurial vapour bath; my faith in the treatment increases every year. I consider the mercurial vapour bath to be in syphilis what quinine is in intermittent fever." This opinion was given to me in my own consultation-room by Dr. Yandall himself. Dr. Gross, of Philadelphia, one of the most eminent surgeons in the United States, says, "Another method of employing mercury is by a combination of the fumes of mercury with common steam, which Mr. Langston Parker, of Birmingham, the inventor, terms the 'mercurial vapour bath.' I can testify, from considerable experience of this plan, having effected some very extraordinary cures with it, after all other

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methods of treatment had failed. I recollect in particular the case of a young gentleman from Arkansas, who was under my charge on account of tertiary syphilis of long standing, accompanied by an enormous amount of rupial action of the skin, one of the sores being fully as large as a dinner plate, who was promptly cured, comparatively speaking, with the bi-sulphuret of mercury, after a great variety of other means had been fruitlessly employed. My opinion is that this method of treatment is not sufficiently appreciated; it certainly deserves the highest encomiums."

Successful treatment of rupia by the mercurial vapour bath

The bath should be administered in the following way: the patient is placed on a chair, on the seat of which should be put a thin cushion, he should be covered over with an oiled cloth, or india-rubber cape, lined with flannel, or a blanket. The coverings should be made tight about the neck, so as to pre-

Description of the apparatus and mode of using

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Quantity of water to be used

vent the escape of the vapour, unless it is intended the patient should breathe it, which, under certain circumstances, is better; under the chair is placed a small copper or tin bath, holding from a pint to a quart of water, and a stand, supporting a tinned iron plate, on which is placed the preparation to be used; under each of these a large porcelain spirit lamp; the patient is thus exposed to the influence of three powerful agents: heated air, common steam, and the vapour of mercury, which is applied to the surface of the body in a heated and moist state. After the patient has remained in the bath from five to ten minutes, perspiration generally commences, and by the end of twenty or thirty minutes it is generally more or less profuse. The lamps are now withdrawn, and the temperature gradually allowed to subside; in some cases one lamp may be removed before the other;

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when the patient is sweating freely it is sometimes advantageous to remove the water lamp, and leave him exposed to the mercurial fume alone for five or ten minutes. This is to be recommended where a long continued and gentle action is required, as in weak patients.

Variation in the mode of employment

Such is the general mode of application of the mercurial vapour bath, but it admits of a great variety in its use, to suit particular cases. Its action may be made powerful and decisive, to arrest quickly the ravages of rapidly spreading disease; or it may be gently prolonged in weak subjects and chronic cases. These modifications are easily made by increasing or decreasing the heat of the bath, or using more or less of the mercurial preparation.

When quick and decided action is required.

Where it is wished to induce a quick and decided action, the whole power of the baths should be brought into operation, and the largest quantity of mercury used. In rapidly

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spreading ulcers this is required, especially in secondary phagedœna of the throat and elsewhere. I have, time after time, seen rapidly spreading ulcers of the throat which had destroyed great part of the soft palate, arrested by one strong bath, after the patient had resorted to ordinary treatment for days or weeks. In chronic cases, and in weakly subjects, where a powerful action would rather oppress the patient than cure his disease, the power of the bath should be modified, and not so much heat or so much mercury employed. Each particular case may require a greater or less modification of this kind.

Successful in many thousand cases

I have now adopted this treatment in many thousand cases, in almost every form of primary and constitutional disease, and although it would be too much to say that all were cured by it, still I must look upon the mercurial vapour bath as beyond all question the

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most powerful, and what is more, at the same time, the least harmful therapeutic agent that can be employed in the treatment of syphilis.

More certain in some forms of disease than others

The mercurial vapour bath acts with more certainty in some forms of disease than others; it is especially suited to affections of the tongue, to most forms of skin and throat disease, to secondary ulcerations, and a number of anomalous symptoms of constitutional disease which it is difficult to classify. It acts better in the dry or scaly forms of disease than in the moist; it is more certain in lepra or the dry than in the pustular or moist forms; in the former it is almost a specific. The skin diseases, which are symptomatic of syphilis, may be referred to two great classes, the dry or scaly, and the moist or suppurative. In the former I include the various forms of lepra and psoriasis, and in the latter, pustular,

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vesicular, and tubercular diseases, the latter when softened; over the former the mercurial vapour bath has a most marked and certain influence, and is in fact the most reliable therapeutic agent that can be employed in their treatment.

Diseases in which it is most useful

The dry or scaly forms of skin disease almost always yield to a course of vapour, and they are frequently as rebellious to other forms of treatment. These forms of disease appear to follow a certain law, which I have so frequently observed that I have at length been led to look at it as a part of the natural history of the disease. The scaly affections almost always return in the same form after the patient has been apparently cured; but they return in a milder form, and always yield again to the mercurial vapour bath. This may occur once or twice, in a still decreasing degree, always yielding with certainty to the same treatment, and at length returning no more.

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Value of experience

In a disease like syphilis, which sometimes lies dormant for so long a period of time, no plan of treatment can have any claim to confidence that has not received the sanction of time and experience; and twenty years practical experience in the treatment by mercurial vapour has taught me that in the great majority of cases of constitutional syphilis, there is no remedy so effectual, and certainly none so little injurious to the patient; in fact, in most instances the general health improves under its use.

Comparison with other modes of treatment

If the treatment of constitutional syphilis by the mercurial vapour bath be compared with any of the other modes of treatment commonly adopted, it will be found to possess incalculable advantages over them. It spares the stomach, it does not interfere with the general health, and in a vast majority of instances it removes the symptoms of the disease.

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Those who object to mercurial treatment very commonly fall back upon the iodides as remedies; but I here wish to repeat an opinion which I have long held and taught on this subject, that prolonged treatments by the iodides are more injurious than those by mercury. In a great majority of instances iodine suspends the symptoms of disease, but does not cure it.

Evils of prolonged treatments by the iodides

I have seen patient after patient infected with a fear or dread of mercury, who have pursued steadily the treatment by the iodides in almost poisonous doses for years, where the disease has been kept in abeyance by the remedy, but invariably returns after its discontinuance for a few weeks.

Their bad effects on the system in some cases

Such treatments are not without their dangers; far greater than any produced by the judicious administration of mercury. They undermine the muscular strength, seriously impair the digestive powers, render the

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testicles loose and flabby, and produce a condition of iodic cachexia, from which the patient recovers with difficulty, or does not recover at all. The only other methods of treatment worthy of notice, as curative agents, in the treatment of syphilis, are syphilisation, and Zittman's decoction.

Treatment by Zittman's method

Very few persons have either the time, the constitution, or the courage to undergo the latter treatment. It consists in a rigid abstinence, and swallowing some quarts of decoction of the woods; sarsaparilla, &c., daily; and this continued for several weeks. It is a favourite treatment in Germany. I have treated and cured several patients by the mercurial vapour bath, in which this treatment has signally failed. I especially call to mind the case of one gentleman, who had a scaly eruption on the skin and secondary ulceration of the tongue. During the time he was

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under treatment the eruption upon the skin disappeared; the ulceration of the tongue did not yield at all; when however he resumed his ordinary mode of living, the disease returned, and in a few weeks was as bad as ever. Previous to this treatment by Zittman's decoction, this gentleman had taken so much iodine that, during the sweating process, it could be smelt, and the perspiration turned his linen brown. A month's treatment by the vapour of calomel and the bi-sulphuret, entirely removed every symptom of disease, and the patient has never relapsed.

Confinement to the house not necessary during treatment in most cases

The plan of treatment by the mercurial vapour bath does not imperatively require that the patient should be confined to the house during its use. He should, of course, take rather more than the ordinary precautions against cold, damp, and night air. It must be admitted that its efficacy would be

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enhanced by confinement in a moderately warm room, but this is not absolutely necessary, and the patient in most cases recovers very well without it. There are cases certainly in which exposure or exercise would be positively mischievous under any plan of treatment.

Diet

In most cases a liberal, but not stimulating diet, should be associated with the bath treatment, and it is owing to the neglect of this that failures sometimes occur. In fact, I have frequently seen little or no impression made on the disease, when the patient lived low; whilst he has immediately improved, under the same treatment, when this was associated with better living. The same remarks apply frequently to a change of climate as well as to diet, for although syphilis is to a certain extent independent of climate, still I have occasionally seen some remarkable cases

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where a change of air, associated with the use of the mercurial vapour bath, has brought about a cure, which otherwise appeared hopeless. I shall now detail a few cases, by way of illustrating the efficacy of the mercurial vapour bath, making a few comments upon them as I proceed.

Secondary rapid ulceration arrested at once by the bath

A gentleman, about forty years of age, who had suffered from various forms of constitutional syphilis for many years, was suddenly attacked with a rapidly spreading ulceration of the throat. The disease came on suddenly and progressed with frightful rapidity; in forty-eight hours half the soft palate was gone. He was sent from some distance to be placed under my care. I placed him at once in a strong bath, composed of half a dram of calomel and a dram and a half of the bi-sulphuret of mercury; he was kept in the bath forty minutes. The next day the bath was repeated, and the next after

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in a milder form. The first bath arrested the ulcerations. I gave him large doses of opium night and morning, and continued the same plan of treatment, in a modified form, for some days. In less than three weeks the ulceration had healed, leaving a smaller destruction of tissue than I at first thought would be the case.

Liability of sudden attacks of ulceration in constitution tainted with syphilis

There are two or three points in this case that demand attention. In the first place, the occurrence of acute symptoms, without any warning, in a constitution long tainted with syphilis; and secondly, the effect of the vapour treatment on such cases.

In whom most likely to happen

I have so frequently seen the occurrence I have just described in constitutions long tainted with syphilis, that I am led to look upon it as part of the natural history of the disease. It especially is likely to occur in weakly subjects where the health has been

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broken down by long continued internal courses of mercury or iodine; but it very rarely occurs, if the first symptoms of constitutional disease, and the earlier relapses, have been thoroughly treated by the mercurial vapour bath. In this case again, it must be observed, that the vapour arrested the ulceration at once, and in such instances it almost invariably does so.

Efficacy of the baths in such cases

I have so frequently seen secondary ulcerations in the soft palate, such as those just described, arrested at once by the mercurial vapour bath, that I should have hardly thought this case worth recording, but for another circumstance attending it. When this patient first consulted me, he said, "Doctor, I have lost the sight of the right eye for some years, owing to an attack of iritis, I suppose you can do nothing for that?" I replied, "I am afraid not." But

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towards the end of the treatment, in the third or fourth week, to my great astonishment, and his greater delight, he said, "I can see a little with the bad eye. He so far recovered the use of it as to enable him to shoot; a sport he had been obliged to abandon for some years. Since that time I have seen more than one case, where the vision, partially lost from iritis, has been restored more or less completely by the mercurial vapour bath, and I have no doubt that such improvement in this case was entirely due to it.

Beneficial effects in anomalous cases, due to latent syphilis

Again: a gentleman, twenty-eight years old, consulted me respecting some unpleasant symptoms, which he thought might be due to a syphilitic taint, having suffered from various symptoms of constitutional disease for three years. The symptoms now troubling him were edœma of the legs, which were much swollen. On examining his urine it was

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found highly albuminous; the vision of the left eye was much impaired, the pupil contracted, the iris muddy, and the whole eyeball generally congested. Apart from these symptoms the health was pretty good. He was directed to use the mercurial vapour bath four times a week; composed of half a dram of calomel and one dram of the bi-sulphuret of mercury for each bath. In three weeks the edœma of the legs was gone, the albumen had nearly disappeared from the urine, and the condition of the eye much improved, but it was not till after a six weeks treatment that the eye was perfectly restored.

Remarks on such cases

It will be recollected that it was three years from the time this patient was first diseased, till the occurrence of the symptoms I have just described, but another accident occurred which corroborates what I have just said with regard to the occurrence of rapid

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secondary ulcerations and mutilations taking place in persons who have been long tainted with syphilis, coming on without any warning.

Softened node on the roof of the mouth

On one visit this patient complained of soreness in the roof of his mouth. On looking I found a red, hard, elevated spot in the centre of the hard palate, on the right side, neither more nor less in fact than a node. In a day or two this broke, gave issue to a small portion of offensive pus, and, on examination with a probe, I found the bone rough and denuded. In estimating the value of the curative effects of any remedies, especially in reference to syphilis, those only can be considered valuable which have stood the test of time and experience, and when we call to mind that it is almost a law in the pathology of syphilis that the symptoms pertaining to it lie dormant for many years and then break out with violence, it is necessary

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to be especially cautious in saying that such a remedy has cured the patient. The disappearance of a symptom is certainly not the cure of the disease.

Efficacy of the baths in arresting acute attacks of ulceration occurring in syphilitic patients

If no other advantage could be claimed for the mercurial vapour bath than that of certainly arresting in many, nay, in most instances, those rapid ulcerations, and mutilations which sometimes occur in patients, where the syphilitic virus has lain dormant for long periods, it would have accomplished much; but I can say, without the least exaggeration, after twenty years' use of the remedy, and its personal administration in many thousand cases, that no remedy is so likely to prevent relapses, and none is entitled to anything like the confidence that may be placed in it, in arresting those sudden outbreaks of disease that mutilate and disfigure the patient. I may

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perhaps be permitted to quote the experience of another medical man, himself a sufferer from a very formidable outbreak of secondary syphilis, which had resisted various modes of treatment, but which yielded quickly and permanently to a course of treatment by the mercurial vapour bath. "I can never be too thankful," writes he, "for your excellent treatment, and never lose an opportunity of recommending it to every friend I meet similarly affected. I myself shall never adopt any other abroad and hope to be able to write to you from New Granada, and give you still further proofs of its efficacy in a tropical climate."

Surgical testimony to their value

An old friend and pupil of mine, Mr. W. J. Moore, who has long practised in India, and who is the author of two standard works on "The Diseases of India,"* thus expresses

Use of the baths in India supersede other treatments

* *A Manual of Diseases of India.* By W. J. Moore, M.D., &c., in medical charge of the Sanatorium for European Troops on Mount Aboo, &c., &c. London: Churchill, 1861. *Health in the Tropics, &c.*, by the same author. Churchill, 1862.

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himself with regard to the treatment of constitutional syphilis in India:—"I hold that the internal exhibition of mercury is uncalled for; especially is this the case in India. Happily, there is another method of effecting all the good which is capable of resulting from mercury; this is the mercurial vapour bath, originally recommended and so long and so successfully employed by Mr. Langston Parker. I may be permitted to state the result of my experience, which is, that for secondary symptoms occurring in India, of whatever variety, there is *no remedy so efficient*, and less hurtful to the constitution, as the mercurial vapour bath has proved to be." —*Manual of the Diseases of India*, p. 187.

Formidable case successfully treated

The mercurial vapour bath is especially serviceable in secondary ulcerations; those forms which have resisted ordinary treatment for long periods of time. A gentleman,

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about twenty years of age, was sent to me a little time ago, with a serpiginous ulceration, resulting from an open virulent bubo. The ulceration had extended down the thigh, and up the abdomen for a considerable distance; some of the sores were as large as a cheese-plate; they had resisted treatment for more than a year, and continued to extend. They were entirely healed by the mercurial vapour bath, used as I have directed and described, in five weeks. I believe, before the end of the sixth week, they were all entirely closed, with a good, firm cicatrix.

In the secondary ulcerations again, which follow the rupture of the vesicles, or pustules of secondary syphilis, or the softening of tubercles in tertiary syphilis, the bath sometimes produces remarkable cures. A young gentleman was sent to me two years ago, whose health was entirely broken by repeated

Another important case

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outbreaks of constitutional syphilis, which had extended over a period of more than three years. Various plans of treatment were adopted, but without success, the ulcers healed, and broke open again, and one form of skin disease was succeeded by another, till he was reduced to a state of great weakness. In this condition he was placed under my care. Previous to my seeing him he had been submitted to one or two courses of mercury, pushed to salivation. This patient, when placed under my care, was in a most deplorable state. He had four distinct forms of skin disease. 1. Dark coloured marks, left by the healing of old ulcers. 2. Red puckered cicatrices, due to the same cause. 3. Large, foul ulcers. 4. Tubercles, not yet softened. These consisted in large, red, hard circular swellings, varying in size from a split pea to a large marble, they

Success of the baths after the failure of other medicines

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were scattered over the neck and trunk, forty or fifty in number. He had also nodes on both legs, and suffered much from nocturnal pains. In one fortnight after he commenced treatment the ulcers were healed, the nights good, the nocturnal pains gone. The cure, however, was not complete for nearly six months, although he was not confined by the treatment, and went about his usual pursuits during the time. The patient has not relapsed; he has now been well for more than two years.

Remarks on the treatment

This is a very remarkable case; the cure must be attributed to the mode in which the mercury was exhibited. He had been previously placed under mercurial courses, exhibited by the mouth, but without effect; and yet the disease yields to the same remedy employed in another way. This is very likely to be explained by the fact that

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in the mode of giving the remedy, the digestive organs are spared the irritation occasioned by frequent and repeated doses of mercurial medicines. In fact the gastric irritation thus produced frequently sets up a most formidable barrier to the cure of syphilis, and sometimes even to the treatment or palliation of the disease.

Sir B. Brodie's testimony to treating syphilis by the skin

I am persuaded that the real way to cure syphilis is through the medium of the skin and not by the mouth. In a correspondence with the late Sir B. C. Brodie on the treatment of syphilis (whose letter from which I quote now lies before me), he says, speaking of some of my published opinions on this point, "I am glad to see that you call the attention of your readers to the advantages of the external administrations of mercury, as compared with those derived from the use of it as an internal remedy. The more I see of the

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treatment of syphilitic diseases, the more I am confirmed in my opinion on this subject."

Auxiliary remedies

It must not be supposed from what I have said that the mercurial vapour bath is capable of curing all forms of syphilis without the assistance of other means. There are cases in which the addition of other remedies to suit particular cases and circumstances are found advantageous; as there is no specific in medicine, neither is there any remedy with which I am acquainted that will cure all diseases. Quinine will not cure all cases of intermittent fever, but still it is the most powerful therapeutic agent with which we are acquainted in the treatment of that disease; yet it occasionally fails, and as Dr. Yandall has observed, I regard the mercurial vapour bath in syphilis, as I do quinine in intermittent fever. The mercurial vapour bath bears the same relation to the one, as quinine does to the other.

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The preparations of mercury that may be used for the baths are the bi-sulphuret, the grey oxide, the binoxide, the iodide, or calomel, as suggested by Mr. H. Lee, but these may be reduced to two, to the bi-sulphuret and calomel, or these two may be used together; and this is the way in which I generally use them. The whole of the body should be exposed to the action of the vapour except the face. I use an apparatus which incloses all the body except the face, but an extemporaneous covering is easily adapted with a little management. I use also separate lamps, one for the mercury and the other for the water. There is a great advantage in this, as it enables one to separate the heat and moisture with a much greater degree of nicety, and also to leave the patient exposed to the mercurial vapour alone, when a sufficient amount of diaphoresis has been

Forms of mercurial to be used

How the body should be inclosed

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produced by the steam vapour. This also avoids any degree of debility that might be induced by too much heat, or too much perspiration.

Quantity of the mercurial to be used

The quantity of the mercurial proper for an ordinary bath would be from half a dram to a dram of calomel, and from one to two drams of the bi-sulphuret. In skin diseases the bi-sulphuret has many advantages, but it should be pure and carefully made, as it is used very frequently for ordinary chemical purposes, and is much adulterated. In certain and rare forms of disease I have occasionally added small quantities of the iodide of mercury to the bath, from five to ten grains to each bath. In tubercular or pustular diseases of the skin, I have found this useful; but the fumes are very irritating, and when used the face of the patient should be carefully protected.

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Fume of the biniodide successful in a case.

I was consulted some short time ago by a surgeon, respecting the condition of a patient of his, who had secondary ulcerations of a most formidable character, resulting from the softening of syphilitic tubercles. I suggested the mercurial vapour bath, with the addition of a small quantity of the iodide to each bath. By some mistake he put the biniodide instead of the iodide; the effects were very severe upon the patient, producing sickness, pain in the bowels, and smart diarrhoea; but the effects were also very remarkable upon the disease, for not more than two or three baths were given when the ulcerations healed rapidly. The patient, who was before cachectic and weak, became strong and fat; she soon after married, and had two healthy children. This was a case of hereditary syphilis, and there are several remarkable points connected with it, in reference to the

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procreation of diseased and healthy children. This, however, is foreign to the object of this paper, and I must refer the reader, who wishes to inquire farther into these points, to my work "On the Modern Treatment of Syphilitic Diseases." 4th edition, p. 296. The ulceration in this case resulted from the softening of nodes on both tibæ; the nodes on each leg suppurated and broke, and the bone exfoliated, as it always does in such cases, to a considerable extent. The cure was here perfect and permanent, and the lady is now and has been for some years in excellent health, and the mother of several healthy children. She lately consulted me on some matters unconnected with her previous illness, and I was surprised at her good looks. There are some other modes of using the mercurial vapour bath, locally or partially, where a general bath cannot be

Hereditary syphilis

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borne. It occasionally happens that an unfortunate patient shall be so much reduced and weakened by long continued disease, that he is unable to bear the general application of the remedy; though I must confess that it has hardly fallen to my lot to see more than a few such cases. They may, however, and do occasionally occur. A gentleman, upwards of fifty years of age, had a formidable attack of pustulo-crustaceous syphilis. He could not bear a general bath, however carefully administered; it struck him that a partial application of the remedy might do him some good, if it was not as beneficial as its general employ. He contrived an apparatus by which he fumed one leg only, and after using this for some time he fumed the other. The legs were covered with foul ulcers, resulting from the rupture of pustules; many of these covered with a dry, hard,

Local use of the baths

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rupial-looking crust of dark colour. He took plenty of porter, bark, iron, and cod-oil, and fumed his legs regularly with a mixture of calomel and the bi-sulphuret of mercury. In six months he was restored to a very good state of health. I may be permitten to quote, in his own words, his account of the effects of the vapour locally on himself.

"The moist vapour," writes he, "has turned out most beneficial in my case. I was in a sad, suffering state night and day. Night perspirations; the ulcers on the right leg had eaten into the muscular fibre of the calf, causing constant restlessness and great pain; the ulcer was covered with a green slough. In this state it occurred to me to try your bath locally to the right leg alone; the effect was surprising; the first bath of twenty minutes gave instant relief to the pain, and

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cleared off the green slough, and the bath the next day produced a square inch of healed surface. I then went on with the baths twice a week, taking the tonic as usual. At the end of April the right leg was soundly cured. I now began to vaporise the other leg, which, however, had greatly improved whilst treating the right leg; but a most curious thing occurred; the left testicle, which had been enlarged for many years, being half as large again as the right, is now reduced to the same size as the other; this clearly shows that the disease was latent in it."

Ordinary modes of giving mercury generally fail

The ordinary modes of conducting mercurial courses by the use of the drug internally given, not only frequently fail in curing the disease, or rather in removing the symptoms of the disease for which they are given, but a class of affections are commonly thereby induced, which are the result of such treat-

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ments; so that on many forms of constitutional syphilis being presented to our notice, it is difficult to say what has been produced by the disease, and what by the remedy employed for its proposed cure. Indeed, a peculiar form of constitutional disturbance is often set up, which has masked or changed the natural course of the disease, and which condition would not have occurred if mercury had not been given. It may be thought that I am too much wedded to my own views, and my own mode of treatment, but this is not so. When Dr. Yandall called on me from the United States, he said, "My faith in your plan of treatment increases every year. The more I see of its results the more confidence I have in it. Dr. Bumstead, Lecturer on Venereal Diseases in the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New York, says, "Mr. Parker's method is safer, quicker,

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more certain, and less frequently followed by relapses, and more efficient in obstinate cases than any other, and from my own experience I can testify to its very great value."

A few selected cases

I append a very few cases, selected from thousands of others. These I have chosen simply because they show the remarkable effects of the treatment upon cases which, without the aid of the baths, as far as I know, must have been utterly hopeless. I say thousands of others, this may seem almost an exaggeration, but when it is considered that I have now adopted this practice for more than twenty years, and have, during that time, superintended the administration of the baths, from three to five times every day, the numbers stated will be found not very far wrong.

CASE.

A gentleman, upwards of forty-five years of age, was sent to me from a distance, with a

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hope that I might be able to do something for him, in the way of relief. Cure, his friends thought, was out of the question. He had been confined to his house for many months, and the greater part of the time to his bed, with secondary sores, which resulted from the rupture of the pustules of secondary syphilis. The trunk, the arms, the legs, and the back were covered with these sores in various conditions; as fast as they healed in one place they broke out in another. He was weak and emaciated, and tormented with night sweats. He was so weak that he could not at first bear a general bath, and the lower half of the body only was exposed to the action of the vapour. He used ten grains of calomel and half a dram of the bi-sulphuret of mercury for a bath, continued for fifteen minutes every night. As he improved a general bath was used, and the whole body

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immersed; this was done three times a week. The progress of the case was exceedingly favourable, and in a few weeks most of the sores had healed, the patient was able to dress himself and ride out. At the end of about six months he was quite well, *i.e.*, all the sores had healed, but the skin presented a very curious appearance; it was rough, corrugated, and uneven in places, owing to the puckering of the skin caused by the contraction of the cicatrices of the numerous sores he had upon it. It looked as though he had been burnt, and in fact the healing of such sores gives the idea that the skin had been burnt. I have noticed it time after time, and should have supposed such had been the case, did I not know the true cause of such an appearance.

It is almost impossible to convey a correct idea in writing of the formidable nature of

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the case I have just narrated, or the very great benefit he derived from the vapour treatment, when everything else had failed. Mercury by the mouth, by friction, the iodides, chlorate of potash, cod oil, sea air, all had been tried without success. Yet he began to amend from the third day after the baths were put into operation.

Case of bone pain

A gentleman who had been married for some years, and who had not had any primary venereal disease in any shape or form since then, consulted me respecting a painful affection of his arm. The chief complaint was of the left fore-arm, the bones of which were much enlarged and tender to the touch; the night, however, was the period of suffering, directly he got warm in bed the pains began, and to such a degree as to deprive him entirely of rest; he had not slept without pain one night for seven

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years. The disease was a syphilitic periostitis. Mercury by the mouth, iodine, blisters, &c., had all failed in giving more than transient and temporary relief. The bones of the nose were also thickened, and the seat of shooting pains, the left testis, was five times the size of the right.

Effect of the baths

After the third bath the pains returned no more, the tenderness was gone from the arm, and he could bear the bone pressed and examined with a tolerable degree of freedom and force, although previously it had been exquisitely tender. The whole of the symptoms had disappeared after a three months course of the vapour, which was interrupted from time to time. It has been said, and is generally supposed, that the iodide of potassium is all but a specific for periosteal inflammation of syphilitic origin, and nocturnal or bone pain, without evident marks of inflam-

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matory action. Doubtless, in many cases, it is an excellent and efficient remedy, but its good effects are rather palliative than permanent; and there are also many cases in which it totally and completely fails; not so with the mercurial vapour bath, it is all but certain in its influence over the symptoms of disease I am describing, and the rapidity with which it removes them is sometimes very remarkable. M. Diday, a great authority on syphilis, says, speaking of the effects of the iodide over these pains, "The iodide of potassium palliates these pains more frequently than it cures them, without relapse; but to compensate for this the relapse, though it be frequent, never fails to obey the remedy." As an illustration of this, I narrate the following

CASE.

An officer on foreign service, suffered in a

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very severe manner from these nocturnal pains. He had suffered for ten years, unless he was under the influence of the iodide of potassium. The attacks of pain recurred about every month, and were always relieved, and entirely taken away by the iodide of potassium; but if he discontinued the remedy he was never free from them for more than ten days. Weary of this constant recurrence of pain, and disgusted with incessantly swallowing physic, which always left a metallic taste in his mouth, from which he was never free; he got invalided, came home, and placed himself under my care.

He was under treatment for about three months, taking a general bath about four times a week, composed of ten grains of calomel, five of the iodide of mercury, and a dram of the bi-sulphuret. Writing to me more than a year afterwards he says, "You

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may remember that when I applied to you for advice I was then suffering from one of my painful attacks, which had generally come on once a month for the last ten years. Since the treatment I went through with you, I have had no return of those attacks, and have never had any nocturnal pain whatever."

Case.

A young gentleman and lady married, with all the prospects of future happiness that fortune and apparent health could give. In due course the lady became pregnant, but miscarried. The same thing happened in her second and third pregnancies; a good deal of mental uneasiness was produced, and some suspicions arose. The fourth child was born alive, but at six weeks old had snuffling and the eyes became bad; condyloma also appeared about the anus. A neighbouring

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physician of great local eminence was consulted, who said rather abruptly, "The child is diseased." The parents, as may naturally be supposed, were shocked and horrified beyond measure; the father having at a remote period before his marriage been affected with syphilis, but the mother had never exhibited the least symptom of the disease. He was put on a course of blue pill and iodide of potassium; the mother at first was not treated. A fifth child was born, who at the end of the first month had symptoms of syphilis. The father was again only treated, and a sixth child was born diseased. The mother was again examined, but no trace of disease could be found, in the throat, vagina uterus, or elsewhere. The patients were now placed under my care; I recommended that both should be treated by a full course of mercurial vapour, and that no inter-

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course should take place during that period. The seventh child was born healthy, and has remained so, and neither father nor mother have as yet exhibited any farther symptoms of disease.

Treatment of the parents of diseased children

This case illustrates one or two very important points in the treatment of syphilis. First, it establishes the law, which should always be acted on, that in the event of two married persons, apparently healthy, having a diseased child born to them, that both should be treated, although the mother has never shown the least trace of disease. Secondly, it shows the efficacy of the mercurial vapour treatment, after the failure of several of the ordinary methods. It is true an exception might be taken to this, since the mother was never treated till the mercurial vapour bath was used; but, on the other hand, it is hardly probable that the father could

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have been cured by the previous treatments, or he would not have continued to procreate diseased children.

General remarks on the vapour treatment

There can be no doubt that this plan possesses an efficiency, and produces results that can be effected by no other. In a great number of cases it is perfectly efficacious and curative alone, without the assistance of any other treatment. In other cases it acts as a powerful auxiliary, and so materially does it assist, that the remedies before employed do not cure or remove the symptoms against which they were directed till the mercurial vapour bath is used. It is free from all injury or risk, and does not disturb the patient's general health; if properly managed, this commonly improves under it. In many cases such as I have described, the remedies have been, under the old plans, if not worse than the disease, almost as bad. We need only

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go back to the late Sir Astley Cooper's account of the treatment adopted in Guy's Hospital in his day for an illustration of this.

Under the present plan experience has already proved, and I hope will still go further to prove, that a number of the evils attendant on the class of diseases I have been considering, may be mitigated, and in many altogether removed.

There are one or two points, in the management of the bath, which perhaps I have not dwelt upon with sufficient minuteness, and they are of very considerable importance. The quantity of water should not be too large, a pint, or a pint and a half, is quite enough. The diaphoresis should not be too great. If these points are not attended to the mercury becomes too much diluted, and the specific effect is weakened, or altogether lost. It is very important, again, that two

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receptacles should be used, one for the water and a separate one for the mercurial preparation, and that there should be a separate lamp for each. When the patient perspires freely, the lamp under the water should be removed, and the one under the mercury only suffered to remain till the operation is completed. At the end of that time, if the bi-sulphuret has been used, with or without calomel, the body should be wiped dry, and gently rubbed. If calomel alone have been used, and there is not much damp on the skin, there may be no occasion to wipe the skin dry. Mr. H. Lee thinks that, by suffering the deposit from the calomel to remain, that a still further absorption of the mercury would take place, and its specific effect more surely induced.

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